



NICK MACCHIONE, FACHE
AGENCY DIRECTOR

County of San Diego

WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
3851 ROSECRANS STREET, MAIL STOP P-578
SAN DIEGO, CA 92110-3134
(619) 531-5800 • FAX (619) 542-4186

March 10, 2020

TO: Colleges and Universities

FROM: Wilma J. Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,
Public Health Officer & Director,
Public Health Services

RE: COVID-19 PLANNING AND RESPONSE EFFORTS

I am sending you this communication on behalf of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) Public Health Services (PHS) department (local health department). It has been just over one month since my last update to you on the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) global outbreak, which is rapidly changing day-to-day.

It is important to know that while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) considers that this is a serious public health threat, currently, the risk for the general American public remains low. That could, however, change at any time as the situation remains fluid. Globally, as of March 8, 2020, at 3:00PM, there have been over [109,832 cases and 3,803 deaths](#) associated with COVID-19. Nationwide, there have been [537 confirmed cases in the United States](#) (U.S.), including [114 in California](#), with numbers changing by the hour. It is important for you and your organization(s) to continue to follow updates on the local, state, national, and global situations, as the virus inevitably will continue to spread for some time.

My last update provided an overview of County preparedness efforts. Since then, community-acquired infections have occurred in various U.S. locations. Even though we only have one presumptive positive, travel-related case in San Diego County, in the last week the disease has spread to over [100 countries](#), and therefore, we must be prepared for an imminent outbreak or pandemic.

As a college or university, the County is asking you to review and share this information with your colleagues, staff, and students, as well as begin planning efforts for your school. Please review the CDC website for additional guidance that may be of interest to you and your organization. As further guidance is developed, this information will be posted on the County and/or the CDC websites. The following links are important resources:

- [Guidance for Student Foreign Travel for Institutions of Higher Education, March 9, 2020](#)
- [Higher Education Guidance on Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19, March 7, 2020](#)
- [CDPH Guidance for Mass Gatherings and Large Community Events, March 7, 2020](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education \(IHE\) to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), March 2, 2020](#)
- [CDPH 2019 Novel Coronavirus Guidance for Colleges and Universities, February 11, 2020](#)
- [CDC Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#)

In addition, this letter provides guidance to you, your leadership, and your institution to prepare for a COVID-19 outbreak or pandemic. At this time, the County encourages you to:

- Sign up to get County News Center stories emailed directly to you [here](#) and encourage your staff to do the same;
- Review and disseminate the County of San Diego [Fact Sheets](#) to your staff;
- Develop and implement strategies to protect your workforce from COVID-19, while ensuring continuity of operations. (CDC recommends that during a COVID-19 outbreak, all sick employees should stay home and away from the workplace, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene should be encouraged, and routine cleaning of commonly touched surfaces should be performed regularly);
- Review your organization's Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP);
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding sick leave;
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding telecommuting (i.e., working from home);
- Develop or update policies and procedures regarding other social distancing strategies, such as videoconferencing for meetings and canceling large events;
- Develop or update pandemic planning documents;
- Develop or update any other guidance documents specific to your school to contain the spread of COVID-19; and
- Ensure review of all of the above documents by your leadership, staff, students, volunteers, and contractors.


The County of San Diego has an established preparedness and response system in place. This process brings together surveillance, criteria to guide evaluation of a patient under investigation, epidemiological investigation, public health laboratory testing, education and outreach, and levels of response. To date, the County has taken numerous actions in accordance with the [Consumer Version of the COVID-19 Response Plan](#).

I want you to know that we are all in this together with one singular mission, to protect the public and prevent the spread of this virus. I want to emphasize that your decisive leadership, action, and support are essential, and your partnership is greatly appreciated. If your employees or students have questions or concerns related to COVID-19, please encourage them to call 2-1-1 for general information.

For additional information about the outbreak and associated resources, please go to the coronavirus websites at [CDC](#) and the [County of San Diego](#). There you will find the latest CDC guidance and local information, respectively. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at MOC.PHO.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support to keep the residents of San Diego County healthy, safe, and thriving.

Sincerely,


WILMA J. WOOTEN, M.D., M.P.H.
Public Health Officer & Director
Public Health Services

cc: Helen Robbins-Meyer, County of San Diego, Chief Administrative Officer
Nick Macchione, County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Director